

## **Mary Mother of the Lord 2025**

Today we gather to celebrate the feast of Mary Mother of Jesus. Anglicans believe that good theology is Christ-centered, scripturally based, consistent with tradition and human reason. Whatever we believe about Mary it must be consistent with these principles while scholarship over the centuries has enlightened us in many ways and challenged misconceptions about Mary while respecting her place in theology and in the life of Jesus.

The Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission in 2004 states, "Mary is marked out from the beginning as the one chosen, called and graced by God through the Holy Spirit for the task that lay ahead of her and that at the Annunciation "the word of God delivered by Gabriel addresses her as already graced".

The Gospel today reminds us of her centrality in the fact of the incarnation, and the real, simple or even austere circumstances of her delivery of Jesus. It also reminds us that she and Joseph were strangers, outsiders and sojourners when Jesus was born in Bethlehem; and as another story in Matthew's Gospel has it, their subsequent flight into Egypt even makes Jesus a refugee - a queue jumper - as well as a child born in poverty.

The Song of Mary we have just sung spells out the radical nature of Mary's response to the call of the angel. She is Mary the prophet, she is the voice of the oppressed and those in need, the singer of God's justice song. The song is soaked in Jewish women's history echoing the words and stories of Miriam, Hannah, Judith, and Deborah. That the words are subversive and on occasions I have discovered that when the British ruled India the Magnificat was banned from being sung in churches.

"My soul magnifies the Lord ,and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour>"

"He has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant"

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly with good things, and sent the rich away empty"

These particular stories are not however just poignant passing images within Jesus' and Mary's lives, but point to something fundamental about the character of the incarnation itself.

It is easier perhaps to think of Mary as the one who submits to God's gracious but powerful will in saying "yes" to the divine message. But in fact, the incarnation is above all a submission by God to the perils of human existence.

Journeying into human life at the time of the birth of

Jesus was as always, a risky business, for child as for mother; pregnancy and birth may be marvels of life, but they are dangerous ones.

In John's Gospel the incarnation is described in these remarkable terms: "the Word became flesh and lived among us". The word translated "lived" or in older versions "dwelt", is literally something more like "camp" - in classical Greek it sometimes means "to find a harbour". Thus, while the first part of that verse tells us that the Word really does become flesh, and does not merely borrow human clothes for the sake of the Gospel, the second part suggests a sojourn, a journey and yes literally a voyage - the Word became flesh and sailed into our immigration zone. John says in the same prologue about the incarnation that "his own people did not receive him" - some things have not changed.

The incarnation is thus the beginning of God's acceptance of risk, of frailty and mortality, of which the Cross itself is the definitive sign and fulfilment, the ironic journey's end where God shows his triumph precisely in the thing we fear and avoid most, the sign that the incarnation really was God's sharing in our human life completely.

God's journey to birth through Mary, into the leaky boat of human existence, is undertaken not for Jesus' safety and

freedom however but for ours.

Most Australians have much to be thankful for, in freedom, security and relative prosperity, materially speaking. God arrives, become flesh, on the shore of our lives and offers even more; true freedom, fullness of life.

Accepting citizenship of God's reign may find us changing how we deal with our own material realities; it calls us to consider a fresh what true security, real prosperity, and lasting freedom are. Fully welcoming Christ as Mary did, we find ourselves strangely and fully welcomed too.

The life of Mary and the Magnificat is a song of much hope. The challenge for all of us is to find our own voice in today's world, in this community to share Mary's hope with a world desperate to hear.  
Amen